



# LIBYA NEWS UPDATE

Friday, October 08, 2021

## RUSSIA'S RETURN TO AFRICA: THE WAGNER FACTOR

After weeks of speculation, there is now growing evidence that members of the Russian mercenary group Wagner are now in **Mali**. As with Russia's deployment of mercenaries in the **Central African Republic (CAR)**, Libya, where Wagner Forces have deployed on the side of Libyan warlord Khalifa Haftar, has served as a springboard for Moscow's military deployment in other parts of Africa.



According to The New Arab, Russia, which has taken a major foreign policy step through its 2015 intervention in Syria, has turned its attention to **sub-Saharan and Central Africa** with the idea of not only gaining access to the region's diamond and gold mines but also challenging its geopolitical opponents. **The Sahel - and in particular, Chad, Mali and the CAR - provide a particularly good opportunity for Russia to deploy the foreign policy model it has introduced in Ukraine and developed in Syria and Libya, which includes linking oligarchic interests, bringing influence to the Kremlin's security apparatus, and the protection of these gains through mercenary companies such as Wagner.**

**In Chad, where President Idriss Déby was killed in an attack by FACT rebels this April, it was reported that they had been trained by Wagner at Libya's Al Jufrah airbase, which is run by Khalifa Haftar and is believed to be used as a main platform for the Russians.** The recent escalation in Chad, the anti-French sentiment following the assassination of Déby, and the takeover of power by the army - whose generals had sent forces to support Haftar just a year earlier - has been a warm welcome for Russia.

**Russian advances at the cost of French influence has also recently extended to the west of Libya, in Algeria, where security cooperation with the Kremlin is becoming increasingly more concerning for France and its counter-terrorism efforts in the region.**

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## LIBYAN WARLORD HAFTAR CANNOT CLAIM IMMUNITY, US COURT SAYS

Gen. Khalifa Haftar cannot claim head-of-state immunity as a defense in lawsuits accusing him of atrocities in Libya's civil war, an East Virginia District Court has ruled. In its court filing, Haftar's defense team advised the court that the Libyan Government of National Unity (GNU) had been prohibiting Haftar from appearing in court, a claim which GNU representatives categorically denied.

The Ministry of Defense of the GNU denied issuing a note requesting the US authorities to exempt Haftar, who holds US citizenship, from appearing in court, stating that it "observes the rule of law and would not interfere in the work of the national or international judicial authorities." It also highlighted that the alleged note from the MoD used by Haftar's defense team was a forged document.